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Leaving Congress: House of Representatives and Senate Departures Data Since 1989

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Summary

Members of Congress leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons; these may include resignation, death, or chamber action during a Congress, and retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office at the end of a Congress. In the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through 112th Congress (2011-2012), on average, two Senators and nine Members of the House of Representatives have left before the conclusion of a Congress. Over the same period, on average, 11 Senators and 61 Members of the House left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office. This report also provides data on those Members who have announced an intention to retire at the completion of the 113th Congress (2013-2014).

The data provided here may offer insight concerning the turnover of membership in each chamber, but any such conclusions should be drawn with care, as there appears to be no pattern to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

Detailed information regarding 113th Congress departures is available at http://www.crs.gov/resources/Pages/Congress_113_departures.aspx.

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In each Congress, Members leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons. In the course of a Congress, reasons could include resignation, death, or chamber action. At the conclusion of a Congress, Members depart due to retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office.

In the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through 112th Congress (2011-2012), on average, two Senators and nine Members of the House of Representatives¹ have left before the conclusion of a Congress. Over the same period, on average, 11 Senators (11% of Senate membership)² and 61 Members of the House (13.8% of House membership) have left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office.

This report provides data on Members who have left Congress since 1989. Data are divided into two broad categories. The first category, “in term” departures, addresses Members who leave prior to the conclusion of a Congress. Circumstances of in term departures include a Member’s resignation or death, or the action of a chamber regarding a Member’s status.³ The second category, “completed term” departures, includes Members who leave the House or Senate at the completion of their terms. This includes Members who retired, were defeated for reelection, or who did not run for reelection to the House or Senate because they sought other elective office. **Table 1** provides departure information for the House since the 101st Congress (1989-1990). **Table 2** provides House completed term departures as a percentage of chamber membership for the same period. **Table 3** and **Table 4** provide Senate departure information, and completed term departures as a percentage of chamber membership, respectively, since the 101st Congress. Detailed information regarding 113th Congress departures is available at http://www.crs.gov/resources/Pages/Congress_113_departures.aspx.

Table 1. House of Representatives Departures Data, 101st-113th Congresses

Congress, Years	In-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Completed- Term Departures	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	9	6	3	40	15	14	11
102 nd (1991-1992)	9	6	3	108	50	46	12
103 rd (1993-1994)	9	6	3	81	27	39	16
104 th (1995-1996)	9	8	1	66	32	25	9
105 th (1997-1998)	10	5	4	40	22	9	9
106 th (1999-2000)	4	1	3	39	20	11	8
107 th (2001-2002)	10 ^a	5	4	50	22	17	11
108 th (2003-2004)	6	6	0	35	17	9	9
109 th (2005-2006)	6	6	0	49	14	26	9
110 th (2007-2008)	13	6	7	51	24	22	5
111 th (2009-2010)	17	12	2	93	19	58	16
112 th (2011-2012)	13	12	1	79	25	40	14
113 th (2013-2014)	2	2	0	N/A	0	0	9

¹ Data include Representatives, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner.

² In some instances, Senators were appointed to fill a Senate vacancy, and did not stand for election to a full term. In this report, those Senators are counted as retiring.

³ In one instance since 1989, a Member was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.

Congress, Years	In-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Completed- Term Departures	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
Average	9	7	3	61	24	26	11

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 113th Congress data are current through June 24, 2013, and include those who have resigned or have announced their resignation will occur before the end of the 113th Congress, and those who have announced they are standing for other offices in regularly scheduled elections. Averages, which do not include the 113th Congress, are rounded to the whole number; in term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

- a. Includes one Member who was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.

Table 2. House of Representatives Completed-Term Departure Percentages, 101st – 113th Congresses

Congress, Years	Completed-Term Departures	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	9.1%	3.4%	3.2%	2.5%
102 nd (1991-1992)	24.5%	11.4%	10.5%	2.7%
103 rd (1993-1994)	18.6%	6.1%	8.9%	3.6%
104 th (1995-1996)	15.0%	7.3%	5.7%	2.1%
105 th (1997-1998)	9.1%	5.0%	2.1%	2.1%
106 th (1999-2000)	8.9%	4.6%	2.5%	1.8%
107 th (2001-2002)	11.4%	5.0%	3.9%	2.5%
108 th (2003-2004)	8.0%	3.9%	2.1%	2.1%
109 th (2005-2006)	11.1%	3.2%	5.9%	2.1%
110 th (2007-2008)	11.6%	5.5%	5.0%	1.1%
111 th (2009-2010)	21.1%	4.3%	13.2%	3.6%
112 th (2011-2012)	17.9%	5.7%	9.1%	3.2%
113 th (2013-2014)	2.0%	0%	0%	2.0%
Average	13.9%	5.5%	6.0%	2.5%

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 113th Congress data are current through June 24, 2013. Percentages are based on 440 House Members in 101st-110th Congresses, and 441 Members (435 Representatives, 5 Delegates, and Resident Commissioner) in the 111th-113th Congresses. Averages do not include the 113th Congress.

Table 3. Senate Departures Data, 101st-113th Congresses

Congress, Years	In-Term Departures	Resigned	Died	Completed- Term Departures	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	2	1	1	3	2	1	0
102 nd (1991-1992)	4	2	2	13	6	5	2
103 rd (1993-1994)	3	3	0	13	8	4	1
104 th (1995-1996)	2	2	0	15	12	2	1
105 th (1997-1998)	0	0	0	8	5	3	0
106 th (1999-2000)	2	0	2	11	5	6	0
107 th (2001-2002)	2	1	1	7	4	3	0
108 th (2003-2004)	0	0	0	9	7	1	1
109 th (2005-2006)	1	1	0	13	4	9	0
110 th (2007-2008)	2	1	1	8	5	3	0
111 th (2009-2010)	7	5	2	17	12	4	1
112 th (2011-2012)	2	2	0	12	10	2	0
113 th (2013-2014)	2	1	1	N/A	6	0	0
Average	2	1	1	11	7	4	1

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 113th Congress data are current through June 24, 2013. Averages, which do not include the 113th Congress, are rounded to the whole number; in term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

Table 4. Senate Completed-Terms Departure Percentages, 101st – 113th Congresses

Congress, Years	Completed-Term Departures	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	3%	2%	1%	0%
102 nd (1991-1992)	13%	6%	5%	2%
103 rd (1993-1994)	13%	8%	4%	1%
104 th (1995-1996)	15%	12%	2%	1%
105 th (1997-1998)	8%	5%	3%	0%
106 th (1999-2000)	11%	5%	6%	0%
107 th (2001-2002)	7%	4%	3%	0%
108 th (2003-2004)	9%	7%	1%	1%
109 th (2005-2006)	13%	4%	9%	0%
110 th (2007-2008)	8%	5%	3%	0%
111 th (2009-2010)	17%	12%	4%	1%
112 th (2011-2012)	12%	10%	2%	0%
113 th (2013-2014)	N/A	6%		
Average	11%	6%	4%	1%

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 113th Congress data are current through June 24, 2013. Averages, which do not include the 113th Congress, are rounded to the whole number; in term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

The data provided in this report offer insight into the manner by which Members of Congress leave the House or Senate, and offer preliminary insight about some of the factors that may influence the turnover of membership in each chamber. At the same time, any conclusions based on these data should be drawn with care, since there do not appear to be patterns to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

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